

MEDICINE

Appendicitis Hits High Society the Hardest

► **YOUNG PEOPLE** in high society get hit harder by that age-old curse, appendicitis, than do those of more modest means, Dr. J. A. H. Lee of the Medical Research Council, London Hospital, reports in the *British Medical Journal* (May 25).

Not only are the higher social and economic classes more apt to get those forms of the disease requiring hospitalization, but the death rate is higher for these classes, too, Dr. Lee reports.

The mortality is about 20% higher for men in social classes that include the professional and managerial workers than it is in the social class made up of unskilled laborers.

An earlier study has also shown the proportion of undergraduates who had the operation was higher in boys from the more expensive schools, Dr. Lee added.

Geography also seems to play a part in who gets appendicitis, with more young men likely to die of the disease in the Glasgow area than in London.

This geographical variation seems to fit in with the evidence of a link between duodenal ulcer and appendicitis, Dr. Lee believes. Such ulcers were also more common in Glasgow and they proved to be an important fallacy in the diagnosis of chronic appendicitis.

The variety of factors that influence the operation and the death rate seem to rule out one single cause for the disease.

"At the present time we are almost entirely ignorant of what these causes may be," Dr. Lee reported.

One possible explanation, he concluded, is the still very common use of purgatives among young people.

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TECHNOLOGY

Noise Shield on Mike Makes Talk Possible

► **MOUNTING** a microphone in a rubber noise shield makes it possible for people to talk to one another in extremely noisy rooms or vehicles, Mones E. Hawley of the Radio Corporation of America told scientists at the meeting of the Acoustical Society of America in New York. Previously, only hand signals have been possible in such circumstances.

Such a microphone-shield combination has been developed and produced in large quantities for the Air Force by RCA. The best form for such a shield was found by building up the shield, one layer at a time like an onion, by dipping wax forms in liquid rubber.

The theory of room acoustics was applied to "sound condition" the small enclosure within the shield. A pad of glass fiber sound-absorbing material was of great value in eliminating the reverberation of high-frequency noise.

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TILT-WING AIRCRAFT—This unusual looking aircraft is the first tilt-wing model ever built, report its developer and manufacturer, the Vertol Aircraft Corporation. When the wing and rotor-propellers are tilted vertically, as shown in the photograph, the aircraft will take off and land in the same way as a helicopter. With its wings tilted horizontally, its flight is like an airplane's.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Guides for Polio Control

► **SALK VACCINE** should be used during a major outbreak of poliomyelitis, Dr. Herman N. Bundesen, president of the Chicago Board of Health, reports in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* (April 27).

This was one of 12 lessons learned as a result of Chicago's 1956 experience with a large-scale outbreak of polio in which there were 1,111 cases reported.

Dr. Bundesen's preliminary report on the lessons learned might well serve as a guide for other cities that face major outbreaks of polio and other communicable diseases. They are:

1. Salk vaccine or any acceptable agent capable of protecting against poliomyelitis throughout the outbreak should be used since the possible benefits are greater than the possible dangers.

2. An all-out effort should be made to see that each known or suspected case is reported as soon as the diagnosis is made.

3. The date of onset of the disease should be used in contrast to data pertaining to the date of report of polio cases to determine better the trend of the outbreak.

4. Early cognizance should be taken of all current statistical data such as socioeconomic status, race and age.

5. Each case, paralytic and nonparalytic, should be reviewed and be rechecked 90 days later.

6. The first case in a community should alert the health officer to the possibility of a major outbreak.

7. A flexible plan for control should be

available to take advantage of any new control procedures.

8. An adequate, closely-knit, well-trained epidemiologic team should be organized.

9. "Visual aid devices" should be used to familiarize those concerned with the outbreak with the day-to-day trends.

10. Close cooperation and full exchange of information should be maintained between all interested groups.

11. An intensive public health education program should be started early to reassure the public concerning the safety of the use of Salk vaccine.

12. Direct personal contact by means of home visits should be instituted by the local board of health when a communicable disease presents a major public health problem.

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TECHNOLOGY

Privately-Financed Atom Lab Is Dedicated

► **AN ATOMIC** research complex, the largest privately-financed research center of its kind in the United States, has been dedicated. It is the General Electric Company's Vallecitos Atomic Laboratory in Pleasanton, Calif., a multi-million dollar facility devoted to the development of peacetime applications of atomic energy.

The laboratory, started in April, 1956, includes a developmental boiling water power reactor which will produce steam for the generation of atomic electric power.

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